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ABSTRACT

All social science serves some agenda: social science research is a value-bound, value-determined, context-situated, and ideologically loaded enterprise. Each researcher makes choices in the following areas, whether tacitly, implicitly, or deliberately: (1) a paradigm choice, either conventional (rationalistic) or emerging (naturalistic); (2) the methodology, or design strategy; (3) a methods choice, either qualitative or quantitative; and (4) a perspectives choice, such as realist, feminist, neo-Marxist, etc. In each of these areas, researchers can opt for either an open or a closed system; for either a pattern or a hypothetico-deductive paradigm. In determining what kinds of knowledge he or she thinks is important, meaningful, powerful, persuasive, and socially acceptable, the researcher is making a political statement. Choice points are illustrated on a figure and a list of references is included. (BJV)

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THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN NATURALISTIC RESEARCH

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THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN NATURALISTIC RESEARCH

This paper is called "The Role of Ideology in Naturalistic Research", but it might as well have been called "The Role of Ideology in All Social Science Research", because I shall argue that all social science services some agenda. The only questions are: Do we know whose agenda? And, Do we know what the agenda is? The questions really are not those having to do with objectivity and subjectivity, or with personal versus neutral perspectives, but those which relate to openness, to "coming clean" about one's systems of belief. The question is not whether we wish to have a value-free social science. Science is a human enterprise, carried on inside of political and social systems, and cannot step outside itself or those who perform it. It is therefore a value-bound, value-determined, context-situated and ideologically loaded enterprise. Since we cannot have, then, a value-free social science, the question becomes, can we have a social science that is honest about its agendas, and reasonably reflexive and introspective about the perspectives which are brought to bear in the interpretation of findings.

In arguing that no social science is value-free, I shall try to demonstrate that proposition by exploring four choice points in every inquiry. Each inquirer makes the same four choices, albeit some make the choices tacitly, some make the choices explicitly, and some make them deliberately. That is, some make choices which reflect their own -- and the profession's -- "received view", without thinking about what they are doing. Some do think about what they are doing, and make the decision for the "received view" anyway, for reasons of personal

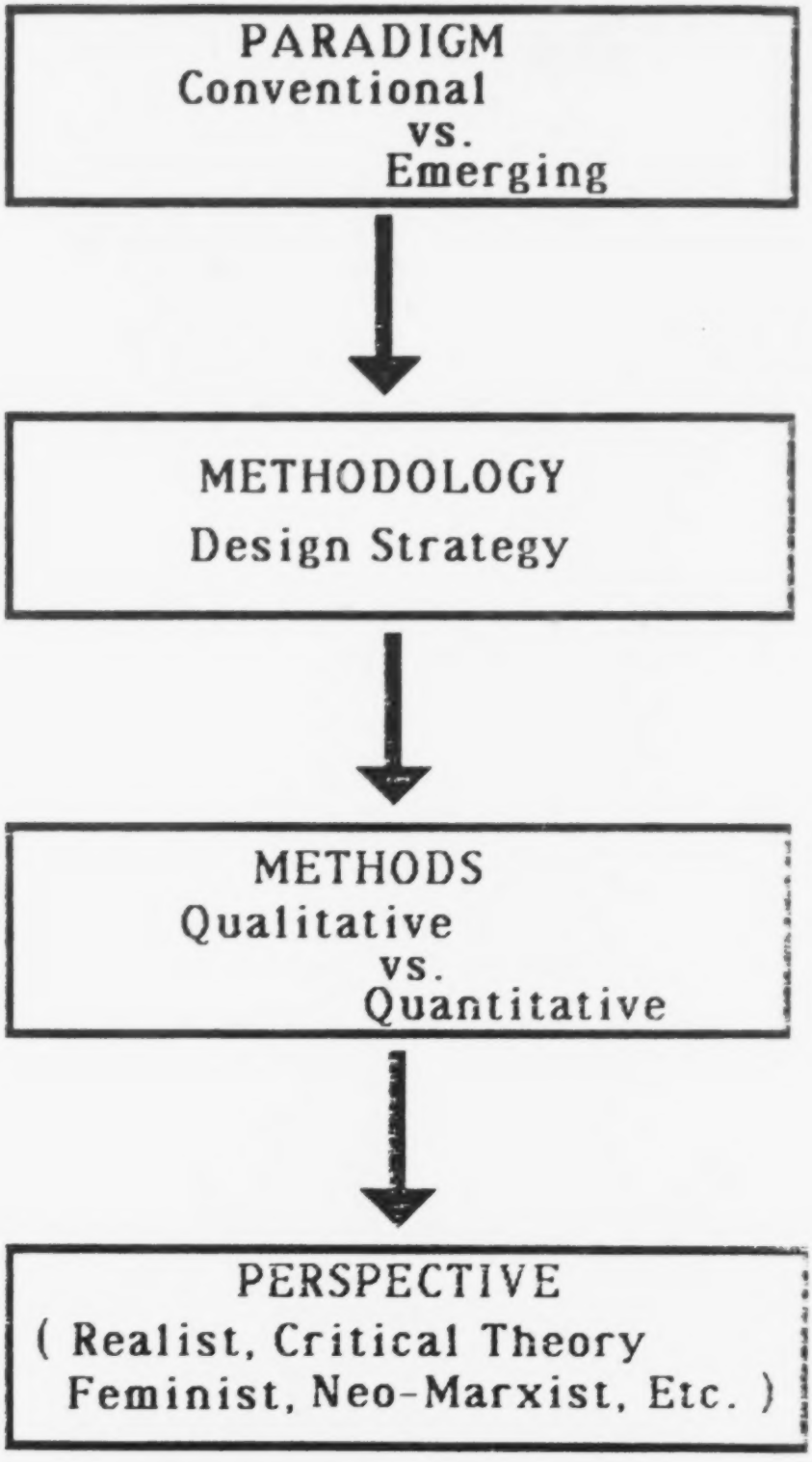
conviction, convenience, or political viability. And others reflect on the choices they make and consciously move toward alternative postures on various dimensions.

I shall call the choice points the paradigm choice, the methodology choice, the methods choice, and the perspectives choice, although afterward, some of you may wish to relabel them by other names. Nevertheless, these four labels have heuristic value for this discussion, and I shall use them for convenience and because they have widespread application and understandability and generality.

Choice point #1: The paradigm choice

At present, there are two competing paradigms in the social sciences. Those competing paradigms go by many names, but at the ontological and epistemological and worldview level, they are fundamentally at odds with each other, and while some may prefer the terms ethnographic, qualitative, anthropological or case study, I prefer the term naturalistic for the one, and conventional, or rationalistic, or hypothetico-deductive, for the other. I prefer the term naturalistic for the first simply because in my own mind, naturalistic refers to a philosophical system, complete and entire in itself, with a set of axiomatic assumptions which are in direct opposition with those which are more commonly understood to be associated with the conventional paradigm. Thus, I am speaking not at the level of methods, where much of the ancillary debate has gone on, but at the level of profound world-view, and at the level of questioning what we can know about the world with any certainty.[1]

CHOICE POINTS



The choice of paradigm is ideologically bound for the simple reason that it dictates a worldview within which certain questions are both raised and answered simultaneously. Among those questions are not only questions of ontology and epistemology, but also questions of power, of legitimacy, of authority, of audience, of consumers of the products of social research, and in addition, questions regarding for whom research has been conducted -- that is, in whose interests are we generating this mass of social science data (Beardsley, 1980; Feverabend, 1981; Finch, 1986; Harding, 1986; Bleier, 1986; Langland and Gove, 1981; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1987)?

It is becoming increasingly clear that the researcher-researched power relationship is unbalanced to the point of political subjugation in the conventional paradigm[2], and indeed, it is the dominant paradigm's view of research participants as "objects" which have brought feminist criticism of science to the boiling point (Keller, 1983; Schaef, 1981; Palmeri, 1983; Harding and Hintikka, 1983; Fee, 1986). The competing paradigm, by demanding focus on social constructions of reality, rather than on some "objective" reality "outthere", confronts the researcher with twin demands -- those of complete honesty (thus avoiding deception) and of the necessity to negotiate for the social constructions -- which in turn impose a collaborative and egalitarian mode on researchers vis-a-vis research participants. The moral imperative therefore is significantly altered by the choice of paradigm.

On the one hand, the conventional and dominant paradigm permits scientist-as-authority to operate constrained only by

legal requirements. The requirements are not insubstantial, of course, but the point is that the constraints reside outside the moral order of the paradigm itself, and are at best,co-e ual and at worst, secondary to rigor and design considerations. Before umbrage is taken, let me hasten to point out that with Gunnell, I believe that "...scientists have not understood particularly well the approach to the philosophy of science which they have relied on almost exclusively"...; that "some...scientists have not really been concerned with understanding science at all, but instead have only sought to enhance the "scientific" image of their discipline"...; and that "some...scientists are unwilling to examine critically fundamental issues in general, and hostile to anyone who tries to do this" [Gunnell, 1975, summarized in Beardsley, 1980:30-31].

In contrast, the moral imperatives which structure researcher-researched relations in the competing paradigm are embedded within the axiomatic boundaries (Lincoln and Guba, 1987), and they derive from the necessity to eschew realism, to justify and illuminate the value structures which imbue the research effort, and to treat knowledge as value-bound, contested, political, open to disconfirmation or revocation.

At an ideological and political level,[3] we have two systems which represent, in the first instance, an authoritarian structure, and in the last instance, a more egalitarian structure. Thus the choice of paradigm represents a specifically political choice the nature of which is between an authoritarian posture regarding knowledge and its production, and one which regards knowledge and knowledge production as problematic, collaborative and nego-

tiated, preferably between equals.

Choice point #2: Design strategy, or methodology

The second choice point reflects ideological concerns in the sense that it specifies whether the overall strategy --i.e., the attack on the research problem -- will proceed from an open or a closed system.posture. Here a second set of value choices insinuate ideology into the research enterprise, since it is at this stage of the research that the researcher typically chooses, frames and bounds a problem; selects likely data sources; determines instrumentation thought to be adequate to tap the data from those sources; and completes the analytic processes necessary to explain, to discover, to predict, to confirm or disconfirm.

The choice of system -- hypothetico-deductive or pat-term / [Kaplan,1964] -- is indicative of two essential ingredients: the "implicit though fairly general agreement on what to do and how to proceed in the field", and the relative comfort of a researcher with open rather than closed systems [Truman, 1965:866]. The ideological problem lies chiefly with the former, although the latter arguably may reflect the same authoritarian versus egalitarian bent implied in the choice of belief system (paradigm). That the agreement about what to do in the field is both implicit and general is problematic. It is problematic in that it is implicit and therefore largely unexamined, and problematic in that it enjoys generality, and therefore enjoys both a community and an audience to its products. That the community itself is limited, closed, perpetuating of power imbalances, largely anti-feminist, anti-minority, and class-bound is becoming painfully apparent

[Freire,1985; Livingstone et al.,1987; Shor and Freire, 1987; Lather, 1986a , b], in both scholarship and polemic.

The visual representations of both systems, i.e., the conventional and closed, and the naturalistic and open, has been discussed elsewhere (Guba and Lincoln, 1988, in press), but a hallmark characteristic of the former is its so-called "self-correcting" nature, achieved through the internal feedback loop between findings and theory, and through the refinement of theory via confirmation and disconfirmation. But the self-correcting/nature of conventional methodology and fundamentally closed blinds paradigm adherents to the tendency of the methodology/strategy itself to obscure relevant but disconcerting data, potentially disconcerting alternative explanations, and unconventional theories which might more adequately explain a given set of "facts". The reliance of the closed system on foreclosing competing theories and anomalous facts internalizes and contains conflict and controversy. Efforts to locate the evidence which would warrant or defeat a given interpretation occur within the system, effectively imprisoning explanation and rival hypotheses to those which are admitted by the problem and its theoretical framework [Beardsley, 1980].

The challenges of an open system, such as that represented by the alternative, competing (naturalistic) paradigm are equally formidable, but in the opposite direction. The challenge is not to assert and defend a supposed neutrality via a methodological stance, nor to demonstrate that science was neutral when in fact it has been, rather oppressive and antithetical to human liberation..." [Rose, 1986:57]. The challenges of the open system lie rather

with the problem of explicitly accosting multiple value systems, with making sense of them within frameworks which are not the researcher's own, and with displaying those multiple, conflicting value systems in such a way as to foster interpretation while honoring complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity.

Another central problem in the analysis of methodology-as-ideology has to do with the way in which conventional scientific strategy "prescribes the interactions which can consummate the union" between the knower (mind) and the knowable (nature), "that is,...can lead to knowledge" [Keller, 1983:190-91]. A closer analysis of this separation of knower and knowable leads to the objectification of the subject (human being) within one ideological commitment, and to the emancipation of the respondent within another ideological commitment.

This emancipation falls along a continuum between refusal by the inquirer to deceive (a methodological stance related to what the inquirer believes is available knowledge and how best to go about getting it) all the way to participating with the researched in liberating his or her own consciousness toward freedom. Somewhere in the middle lies, probably, the "intelligent self-direction" and collaborative inquiry of other alternative paradigms of inquiry (Heron,1981:21).

Implied in the foregoing discussion of open systems is the nature of interpretation itself. If, in dealing with an open system and participative modes of inquiry, we are forced to have our meaning- and sense-making make meaning and sense to others, who should the "others" be? In closed systems of inquiry, i.e., the conventional, most of the interpretation goes on for other inquirers, under well understood rules of discourse, and the

"problem" is not a problem. But under open systems, the distinctions between basic and applied, between knowing and action, are blurred. Research is praxis (Lather, 1986b). And in that instance, our audience is a larger one than simply the community of other inquirers; it includes researched-as participants and others who would use the research in ways which afford them more say in the organization and realization of their lives.

Thus, design strategy (i.e., methodology) is more than formulaic in open systems inquiry; it must be self-conscious and reflexive in order to communicate sufficiently well for action to proceed. Rather than closing off debate, methodology must be invitational in nature, provoking debate, and soliciting interpretation from multiple perspectives.

Choice point #3: The methods choice

The current debate raging in the social science regarding methods has been variously argued to mean no more than enriching the more important quantitative data (Cook and Reichardt, 1979), to enlarging the arsenal of tools at our disposal (Williams, 1986) to providing us with more structured, ordered and formal approaches to solving qualitative analysis problems (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 20-21), to, finally, the posture that methods can be used in the service of any paradigm, and in and of themselves, have no intrinsic paradigm allegiance (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). And indeed, there is no quarrel with any of those approaches, save

for the lingering suspicion that each of them is only partly right. It is surely the case that qualitative methods (for instance) can enrich quantitative data findings; that qualitative methods (again, for instance) can enlarge the repertoire of techniques for data collection and analysis a given researcher has at his or her disposal; that qualitative data analysis can be more systematic, formal and orderly than the more traditional literature has indicated (particularly the literature from early anthropologists and sociologists, who were often silent on the methods they employed, or the systematic processes used to come to terms with the data which they collected); and that indeed, most methods choices can and do remain substantially paradigm-free.

But two questions arise in connection with method which seem to be subtle but important ones: first, To what use are the given methods being put? which is a directly paradigmatic and ideological question, and second, Do some (or all) methods themselves embody assumptions which are ideological (that is, represent political belief systems) in nature?

The answer to the first question can only be found by inspecting the answer to the foregoing questions, that is, what is the methodology representative of in ideological terms? Is it closed- or open-syster inquiry? How does the design specify that research participants can or must be treated? What are the implications for what will be considered evidence (findings), to whom the evidence will be addressed, and for whom interpretation will have to be made? The answer to the second question is not so simple: Are there methods which indeed have "bents" or ideological foundations of their own? I would argue, in a limited way,

yes.

Of course, it is the case (and we have long argued it; see, for instance, Lincoln and Guba, 1985) that methods depend to great degree on the belief system which activates them. But methods -- at least some of them -- have embedded in them assumptions which also speak to ideologies (in the broadest sense). Two examples will suffice to make my point, although the extensive treatment is beyond my analysis at this point.

In the first example, a statistical treatment called causal path analysis, contains several assumptions. The first is that causes for phenomena may be found, described and specified, probably in linear fashion. Furthermore, those causes may be multiple, and we can account for them in mathematical ways which allow the first and most important cause to be designated, then secondary and tertiary causes to be identified in some kind of appropriate order as to their causality (or weight) in forcing the phenomenon to come about. For my purposes, the ideology which drives this method is a) a belief that causes can be identified, and b) the idea that multiple causes of a phenomenon can be designated, sorted and weighed. The assumptional base is that reality is divisible, preferably into causes and consequences, and furthermore, that there do exist -- for purposes of scientific reasoning -- explicitly causative agents or phenomena.

As a second example, consider participant observation. Partipant observation is one of a series of observational field research techniques, associated with a particular collection process and a simultaneous and sometimes subsequent data analysis process (that is, field notes are process both at the time

or shortly after collection). The purpose of such a method is quite clear, even in the research literature which is more quantitative in nature:

> Observational field research is based on the assumption that we may understand people's motives, values, beliefs and interests by studying them in their natural settings (Williamson, et al., 1982, emphases added).

The older literature is even clearer about the role of field research, and the necessity to look for holistic, symbolic and meaning-laden data (McCall and Simmons, 1969; Rose, 1945; Strauss and Schatzman, 1955; Vidich, 1955; Vidich and Bensman, 1954) when employing it.

Contrasting the two methods, it can be argued that the researcher who is attempting to take reality apart into little pieces, and who is attempting to specify causes for events and phenomena is making a statement beyond the paradigm level, where adherence to one paradigm would make that an important and indeed necessary process, and where adherence to another paradigm would make that a ridiculous, sense-destroying, and meaningless -- not to mention, prohibited -- process. Another inquirer, focussing on methods which have as their root assumption that social reality cannot be studied other than wholistically (especially the social reality connected to meaning-making) choses field methods which are consonant with the belief that reality is a social construction and that causes cannot be separated from their effects in any meaningful sense. The former inquirer is not only making a paradigmatic statement consonant with earlier paradigm and methodology-strategy-design choices; she or he is making a choice -- ideological or political in nature -- which

is directly related to the kinds of knowledge which one thinks is important, meaningful, powerful or persuasive and socially acceptable. In the same way, the inquirer who opts for methods which have as their main purpose the discovery of meaning, belief, value, motive in others -- largely indivisible without losing meaning -- that inquirer is likewise making a political statement regarding what he or she believes is useful, important or persuasive data. Further, the second researcher may equally well opt to be making a statement regarding for whom, in whose interests, toward whose power acquisition, he or she collects,analyzes and interprets data.

The choice of method (as well as the other choices implied in the chart) directly bears on the questions of whose agenda, and what is the nature of the agenda. This is so not simply because methods speak to what we believe it is important to know, but the relative accessibility of findings which any given method produces. Many of the forms and formats which array and display quantitative data are inaccessible for purposes of interpretation to any but those with extensive training in their interpretation (e.g., other scientists, statisticians and technical experts). But qualitative data, arrayed in the form of narrative reports in natural language, are accessible to anyone who is functionally literate. For that reason, the latter accounts embody assumptions regarding access to power, regarding what ordinary persons will find compelling, regarding who ought to have information.

Thus, the choice of method not only gives clues as to what kinds of information or data the inquirers thinks is useful, it may sometimes -- although not always -- make a statement about what kinds of persons can or should have access to those data

and interpretations.

Choice point #4: The perspectives choice

Even though it is clear that social science is not value-free or ideologically pure, it is also sometimes the case that persons who carry on the scientific enterprise feel they have no axe to grind. While such social science itself is embedded with some belief systems (or many of them), it is equally clear that some social science is more open about its undergirding ideology. I term this declaration of ideology the "perspectives choice" since many of its practitioners belong to schools of thought which are well recognized in the literature and scholarship, and since to label oneself with one or another perspective immediately declares a political (ideological) system to which one owes allegiance. I speak here of schools of thought -- and sometimes of associated techniques of analysis -- which are readily recognized: critical theory, neo-Marxist, structuralist or functionalist theory, feminist, realist, and the like.

While some would argue that these are paradigm choices, I do not believe they are. When I use paradigm, I simply mean choices of belief about what the nature of the world is, and what we can know about, given a set of tools and techniques. When I talk about perspective, I mean to imply the particular lens through which findings and interpretations will be rendered. In this sense, the scientist can choose not to make explicit his or her lenses (what was originally thought to be value-free social science), or he/she can make explicit the personal and professional perspectives which are brought to bear in interpreting. An in-

quirer may take a feminist stance, or may eschew feminism as a legitimate interpretive point of view; a writer may adopt a neo-Marxist stance, an anti-neo-Marxist stance, or ignore the interpretations which neo-Marxists would put on a given piece of inquiry altogether. Each and all of these choices represent either implicit or explicit value choices, some of which may be termed "perspectival ideologies".

Increasingly and happily (from my perspective), we are seeing the growing legitimacy of paradigm alternatives, strategy alternatives, methods pluralism, and perspectives pluralism in social science research. But the felicitous occasion of a growing pluralism should not blind us to the fact that ideologies pervade all aspects of our social research, and that pluralism itself is a form of ideology, the particular function of which is to obscure the fact that "the distribution of power in the system is significantly [more] unequal that it might appear to be" [Beardsley, 1980:2]. The great danger in pluralism is that it lulls us into believing that we have a voice, that we are being heard, that we have efficacy, when in fact, we have perhaps lost power to a more hidden elite than we formerly confronted.

It behooves us, as inquirers, to make certain not only that we have outlets in which we can be heard, but that the fruits of our new-found pluralism are shaping policy. It would be a travesty for our ideologies to finally enter into the journals, only to have them more neatly finessed out of policy circles.

NOTES

1

Some might argue, and indeed have, that there are other "models" or paradigms for research, and that focussing on these two sets up a straw man which is unrealistic and misleading. But if one picks up a typical text in methods for educational research (e.g., Williamson, Karp, Dalphin and Gray, The Research Craft, 2nd. Ed., 1982), one finds many "forms", including things like survey research, correlational research, factor analytic studies, experimental studies. quasi-experimental studies, meta-analytic techniques, path and causal analysis, Bayesian analysis, and a variety of qualitative techniques (content analysis, field observation, etc.). While those models are thought to be "different from" conventional experimental inquiry, in fact, they display a remarkable similarity in their undergirding assumptions. That means that in any formulation of a model, we ought to be able to discern what its view of the world is. Dissecting the many formulations, several of those which are claimed to be "different from" conventional inquiry -- e.g., survey research, the demographic paradigm, correlational research, factor analytic studies, meta-analytic studies, and the like -- in fact precede from the same sorts of assumptions. That is, they correspond roughly to smoothly with the positivist assumptions of a substantial reality that operates "according to natural laws and natural mechanisms (e.g., cause-effect chains), and a belief in the possibility of objective, value-free inquiry." That is the ontological commitment. At the epistemological level, that is, with respect to methodology, positivism "distinguishes discovery from verification (the separation of theoretical and observational languages which is essential to the belief that empirical determinations can be made which are nature's and not ours), the propositional nature of what is to be investigated (a priori hypotheses or questions based on the theoretical language and to be tested/answered in the observational language), the three essentials for carrying out an objective study which is capable of yielding generalizations that apply to something other than what is being studied...; and feedback loop intended to refine the theory if the hypotheses are not upheld or the questions answered in unexpected ways" (Guba, personal correspondence, February 20, 1988).

Thus, even though claims are made that there are many competing paradigms, in fact, at the level of ontology and epistemology, there are one two -- the two which I have chosen to discuss.

2

The use of the word subjugation is not a trivial decision. The term "subject" (as in "research subject") is derived from the same Latin term as subjugation, i.e., the verb subjugo, to place under the yoke, or to enslave. The late Robert L. Wolf of Indiana University made this point over a dozen years ago in each class which he taught.

3

I have adopted the definition of Connolly for the purposes of this paper. In his work, ideology is

> A system of accepted political beliefs, often needed to orient political activity in problematic situations, also tends to be organized in ways which protect the higher level commitments of its supporters. In situations of limited empirical control it often becomes exceedingly difficult to ascertain whether the accepted ideology is effectively describing and explaining the political environment or whether its explanatory power is severely impaired by its tendency to obscure relevant but potentially disconcerting aspects of the environment from the consciousness of its supporters. A distorting ideology is unfortunate, for, once chosen, an ideology shapes and conditions the political behavior of its adherents [1967:3, emphases added].

The important features of this description, for the purposes of this paper, are the distinguishing of a system of political beliefs from the "higher level commitments of its supporters", which we may translate as paradigm commitments. Thus, political belief systems can and do buttress paradigmatic choices, although they are not necessarily the same set of beliefs; in otherwords, politics and paradigms may be the same, but are not necessarily so, and may be simply reinforcing along similar value schema.

The second important feature of this definition is the very clear recognition that ideologies shape and condition political behavior on the part of their adherents. This is exactly and precisely the argument being made by, for instance, feminists, against the dominant paradigm (primarily for its objectification of research participants, and for its putative claims to value freedom). The political ramifications of logical positivism are being explored for insights into their ability to maintain status quo subjugation of non-scientists, women, persons of color, and others who are not part of scientific discourse.

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